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C O N F I D E N T I A L ZAGREB 000501

SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/SCE (NARDI) AND EUR/PRA (CAGAN)
DOD FOR JCS/J5 (EPPERSON); DIA (STEVENS AND LINDER);
OSD/ISP (SHOEMAKER)

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 ZAGREB 00501 071648Z
E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/06/2013
TAGS: MARR MOPS PREL HR IZ
SUBJECT: CROATIA: PROCEDURES APPROVED FOR STREAMLINED
REQUESTS FOR OVERFLIGHT

REF: ZAGREB 428

CLASSIFIED BY: POLOFF A.F.GODFREY FOR REASONS 1.5 (A,D)

SUMMARY

¶1. (C) AS OF MARCH 10, CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT TRANSPORTING U.S. TROOPS TO SUPPORT POTENTIAL ACTION IN IRAQ MAY TRANSIT CROATIAN AIRSPACE WITH THE STANDARD ICAO FLIGHT PLAN AS THE ONLY ADVANCE WARNING REQUIRED, PROVIDED THEY DO NOT INTEND TO LAND. TWENTY-FOUR HOURS ADVANCE NOTICE IS REQUIRED FOR FLIGHTS WHICH INTEND TO LAND AND REFUEL. THE GOC INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP FINALIZED MODALITIES AND STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES TO IMPLEMENT THE FEBRUARY 26 GOVERNMENT DECISION TO PROVIDE LIMITED LOGISTICS SUPPORT TO THE U.S. THE PROCEDURES ARE (FOR CROATIA) SURPRISINGLY STRAIGHTFORWARD AND SHOULD PROVE SIMPLE TO IMPLEMENT. THE FEBRUARY 26 DECISION DID NOT AUTHORIZE TROOPS TO DISEMBARK DURING STOPS IN CROATIA. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (U) ON FEBRUARY 26, PM RACAN'S CABINET PASSED A DECISION TO AGREE TO LIMITED OVERFLIGHT, LANDING AND REFUELING FOR CIVILIAN CONTRACT AIRCRAFT TRANSPORTING U.S. FORCES FOR POTENTIAL ACTION IN IRAQ (REFTEL). THE DECISION ALSO CREATED AN INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP TO ESTABLISH MODALITIES FOR CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ZAGREB 00501 071648Z
ENGAGEMENT WITH THE U.S. AND TO DRAFT STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES.

¶3. (C) ON MARCH 7, DAO AND EMBOFF MET WITH ASSISTANT DEFENSE MINISTER FOR POLICY JELENA GRCIC POLIC, THE LEADER OF THE WORKING GROUP. SHE PRESENTED US WITH THE GOC'S "PROTOCOL FOR USING AIRSPACE AND AIRPORTS OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA FOR THE NEEDS OF COALITION FORCES UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA." THE PROTOCOL (FAXED TO EUR/SCE), WHICH WAS REFINED IN A SERIES OF INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS, ESTABLISHES WHAT APPEAR TO BE REASONABLE GUIDELINES FOR NOTIFYING THE GOC OF UPCOMING OVERFLIGHT AND LANDING.

- NO ADVANCE WARNING IS REQUIRED EXCEPT FOR A STANDARD FLIGHT PLAN FOR USE OF CROATIA'S AIRSPACE BY CIVILIAN AIRCRAFT WITH NO INTENTION TO LAND OR REFUEL;
- A MINIMUM OF 24 HOURS ADVANCE NOTICE BEFORE AIRCRAFT ESTIMATED TIME OF ARRIVAL IS REQUIRED FOR USE OF CROATIA'S AIRPORTS FOR LANDING AND REFUELING;
- CROATIA DESIGNATES ITS AIRPORTS IN SPLIT AND PULA AS DESIGNATED LANDING SITES, BUT OTHER AIRFIELDS MAY BE USED IN THE CASE OF SPECIFIED NEED.

¶4. (C) ASSISTANT MINISTER GRCIC POLIC EXPLAINED THAT ALTHOUGH THE PROTOCOL ONLY SPECIFICALLY AUTHORIZES THE USE OF AIRPORTS BY MD-11, DC-10 AND B-767 AIRCRAFT, THE WORKING GROUP HAS DECIDED TO INTERPRET THIS AS "AIRCRAFT SIMILAR TO THESE TYPES." DISMISSING AN EARLIER POTENTIAL POINT OF CONTENTION, GRCIC POLIC TOLD US THAT AIRCRAFT COVERED BY THE CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 04 ZAGREB 00501 071648Z
PROTOCOL WOULD BE AUTHORIZED USING STANDARD CIVILIAN FLIGHT CLEARANCES, AND WOULD NOT HAVE TO BE DESIGNATED AS "STATE AIRCRAFT."

¶5. (C) GRCIC POLIC TOLD US THAT THE PROCEDURES AS SPECIFIED ABOVE WERE THE MOST FLEXIBLE HER INTERAGENCY WORKING GROUP COULD PRODUCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE FEBRUARY 26 DECISION; SOME MAY EVEN PUSH THE BOUNDARIES DEFINED BY CROATIAN LAW. SHE SHOWED US A COPY OF THE GOC INTERNAL STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES FOR ACTION TO BE TAKEN UPON NOTIFICATION BY THE USG -- THROUGH THE FOREIGN MINISTRY -- OF AN IMPENDING FLIGHT COVERED BY THE NEW PROTOCOL. THE PROCEDURES APPEARED TO US TO BE STRAIGHTFORWARD AND BUSINESSLIKE, PROVIDING FOR 24-HOUR AVAILABILITY OF RESPONSIBLE OFFICERS IN CASE OF A REQUEST OUTSIDE OF THE NORMAL BUSINESS HOURS.

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